

he felt that the husband's drunkenness might not fully account for the wife's downfall, and he remained at a loss how to proceed until, all at once, he was inspired to bring the woman's seducer back into her home. That would make everything possible, and he decided to model his story accordingly.

He busied himself with " L'Assommoir " on his return to Paris in the autumn, and arranged for the " serialisation " of his completed novel, " Son Excellence Eugene Rougon," in "Le Siecle" early in the following year, 1876.¹

He was then in high spirits. "Fortune," he said to Edmond de Qoncourt, "was at last finding its way to his home." Indeed, a stroke of luck had befallen him. A daily evening

paper, "Le Bien Public," had appointed him its dramatic critic at a salary of six thousand francs a year.

This journal had been started with the support of Thiers, since whose resignation of the presidency of the Republic in 1873 France had been governed in a reactionary spirit by MacMahon's

•ministers. During that troublous period " Le Bien Public," whose connection with Thiers was well known, rendered

good service to the Republican cause, first rallying many hesitating people, then becoming more and more democratic, and helping on that alliance of the middle class

and the *proletariat* which saved France from
monarchical
intrigues and resulted in MacMahon's downfall.
Zola was
delighted to join the paper, particularly as it
allowed him
all freedom in his dramatic criticisms, which
were written
in his usual trenchant style. Of course he had
to give to

¹ A little later it was issued in "book form: "Son
Excellence Eugene
Rougon," Paris, Charpentier, 1876, 18mo, 466 pages. The
demand was smaller
than that for the previous volume, "La Faute de rAbbe"
Mouret"; and in
1873 only the thirty-sixth thousand was on sale.